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## “THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD: YOUR SANCTIFICATION” (1 Thess 4: 3)

Raymond F. COLLINS

*RÉSUMÉ.* — Avec 1 Th 4, 1, c'est clair, Paul commence une nouvelle section de sa première lettre aux Thessaloniens. L'interprétation de cette parénèse chrétienne, la plus ancienne à nous être parvenue par écrit (vv. 1–12), fourmille de difficultés, à propos notamment de l'objet des vv. 3–6a. À l'examen, il appert que l'auteur traite un seul thème, celui de la chasteté à l'intérieur du mariage. Paul prélude à son exhortation par une notation de caractère pastoral où s'expriment des vues sur la manière d'enseigner la morale (v. 1b); une conclusion énonce trois motifs de se conformer à cette exhortation (vv. 6b–8).

Quelques conclusions se dégagent de cette analyse, qui ont une portée générale pour la proposition de la morale chrétienne. D'abord, la morale a sa place dans la proclamation de l'Évangile pour celui qui parle au nom du Christ. Ensuite, l'éthique de Paul est une éthique de la croissance, qu'il insère dans un ensemble théologique, où les notions de « sainteté » et de « volonté de Dieu », par exemple, relèvent de la théologie plutôt que de la philosophie morale. Enfin, le contenu de l'enseignement moral de Paul est traditionnel, le *Sitz-im-Leben* du discours moral appartenant, chez lui, à la *halakhah* juive.

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VERY FEW CHRISTIANS would disagree with these words of Paul to the Thessalonians (1 Thess 4: 3), yet scholars find considerable disagreement among themselves when they attempt to interpret the passage within which Paul first gave literary expression to his thought on sanctification. The primary cause of this scholarly disagreement is that 1 Thess 4: 4–6 contains more than one *crux interpretum*. Twenty-five years ago, the late Bédard Rigaux acknowledged that there wasn't sufficient information available to resolve the crosses<sup>1</sup>. Even after a quarter of a century has elapsed and interest in the Thessalonian correspondence has been renewed, the crosses are still with us. As a result, the interpretation of 1 Thess 4 remains somewhat problematic. This is unfortunate, particularly in view of the fact

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1. Bédard RIGAU, *Les Épîtres aux Thessaloniens. Études bibliques*. Paris: Gabalda, 1956, p. 503.

that vv. 1-11 offer the most ancient documented example of early Christian moral paranesis.

#### THE BEGINNING OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION

It is clear that 4: 1 marks a turning point in the thought of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. The first three chapters of the letter consist of two lengthy thanksgiving periods, each of which is introduced by the characteristic *eucharistoumen tō theō* ("we thank God") formula<sup>2</sup>. Each of these sections concludes with an eschatological climax, a feature that would become characteristic of the Pauline epistolary style. The thanksgiving periods are, in fact, a lengthy reflection on Paul's proclamation of the Gospel to the Thessalonian community. Typically they make use of the "recall motif." The recurring phrase "You know" (*oidate*) serves as a leitmotif of the thanksgiving periods<sup>3</sup>.

In 4: 1, the reader comes upon three formulaic elements whose combined use sharply divides that which Paul had previously written from that which is to follow. These formulaic elements are 1) "Finally" (*loipon oun*); 2) "brethren" (*adelphoi*); and 3) "we beseech and exhort you" (*erōtōmen humas kai parakaloumen*). It has been suggested that 1 Thess was Paul's response to a letter which has been delivered to the apostle by Timothy upon the latter's return from his Macedonian visit (3: 1-2, 6). In this case *loipon oun* could indicate a transition between Paul's response to Timothy's verbal report and his response to the letter from the Thessalonians<sup>4</sup>. However, the first letter to the Thessalonians, unlike the first letter to the Corinthians<sup>5</sup>, contains no clear indication that the Thessalonian community had, in fact, written to Paul. In the absence of any clear indication of an exchange of correspondence between Paul and the Thessalonian neophytes, one should simply take note of the fact that Paul occasionally uses *loipon* as an adverbial accusative as he is approaching the end of a letter<sup>6</sup>. *Loipon* can be rendered as "finally" provided that one is cautious to see in the term neither the conclusion of an explicit reasoning process<sup>7</sup>, nor the beginning of the very last item that the author is about to treat. Paul tends to use this expression in

2. 1: 1; 2: 12; cf. also 3: 9.

3. 1 Thess 1: 5; 2: 1, 2, 5, 11; 3: 3, 4. Cf. also *eidotes* in 1: 4. Outside of the thanksgiving periods, the *oidate* formula occurs only in 4: 2 and 5: 2.

4. B.N. KAYE, "Eschatology and Ethics in 1 and 2 Thessalonians", *Novum Testamentum* 17 (1975) 47-57, p. 47.

5. Cf. 1 Cor 7: 1.

6. 2 Cor 13: 11; Phil 3: 1; 4: 8. Cf. 2 Thes 3: 1; 2 Tim 4: 8. Walter Schmithals, however, has argued that the *loipon* in 1 Thess 4: 1, as well as that found in 2 Thes 3: 1 and Phil 3: 1, is an indication that two originally independent letters have been joined together at that point. W. SCHMITHALS, *Paul and the Gnostics*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1972; pp. 71, 132-133, 192.

7. The *oun* of v. 1, not translated by the RSV, remains somewhat problematic. The formula *loipon oun* appears nowhere else in the NT. *Oun* normally means "therefore", but it hardly seems likely that Paul is drawing an inference either from 3: 11-13 or from the entire earlier part of the letter. To the extent that the introductory *oun* maintains a referential sense, it most likely relates Paul's paranesis to the proclamation of the Gospel as a whole. Preferably, however, *oun* is also found in a paraneitic introduction, together with *parakalō*. Cf. W. NAUCK, "Das *oun*-paraneiticum", *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 49 (1958) 134-135.

a vague and general sense, as a somewhat banal transitional term. It is, however, particularly well chosen for 4: 1 since it often occurs in the introductions to the moral exhortations characteristic of the Stoic-Cynic diatribe<sup>8</sup>.

In the first of his letters, Paul's favorite designation of the Thessalonian Christians is "brethren"<sup>9</sup>. The vocative *adelphoi* occurs thirteen times in 1 Thess<sup>10</sup>, where it occurs most frequently in expressions which introduce a new turn of thought<sup>11</sup>. Within the New Testament the transitional use of the vocative *adelphoi* is nevertheless not restricted to Paul<sup>12</sup>. Indeed the use of the vocative in transitional statements is a common feature of all forms of direct communication, both oral and written, in ancient as well as in modern times. Specifically, then, the use of *adelphoi* in 1 Thess 4: 1 recalls the qualitative relationship which existed between Paul and the community at Thessalonica<sup>13</sup> and thus prepares his readers for the exhortation which is to follow<sup>14</sup>.

The third transitional formulaic element in 4: 1 is the redundant expression<sup>15</sup> "we beseech and exhort you" (*erōtōmen humas kai parakaloumen*). There is no significant difference between the Greek words, so that one ought to see in the expression either another example of that Pauline redundancy which is so characteristic of the style of 1 Thess or a very weak hendiadys. Nonetheless the expression is striking in that it incorporates the verb *parakalō*, a verb which, along with the cognate noun *paraklēsis*, occurs more often under the pen of Paul than in the writings of any other New Testament author. The use of this verb has been the subject of an in-depth study by Carl J. Bjerkelund,<sup>16</sup> who has scrutinized the presence of *parakalō* in Hellenistic epistolary literature as well as in documentation deriving from diplomatic circles in Athens, Corinth, and other locales in Achaia. According to his analysis, the verb affects a diplomatic tone to such an extent that its presence in the literature seems always<sup>17</sup> to reflect a conscious effort by an author to write in a fashion that is attuned to the sensitivities of his readership.<sup>18</sup>

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8. Cf. R. BULTMANN, *Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt und die Kynische-stoische Diatribe*. FRLANT, 13. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1910, p. 101.

9. 1 Thess 1: 4; 2: 1, 9, 14, 17; 3: 2, 7; 4: 1, 6, 10, 13; 5: 1, 4, 12, 25, 26, 27. Cf. R. F. COLLINS, "The Church of the Thessalonians". *Louvain Studies* 5 (1975) 336-349, pp. 347-348.

10. 1 Thess 1: 4; 2: 1, 9, 14, 17; 3: 7; 4: 1, 13; 5: 1, 4, 12, 14, 25.

11. 1 Thess 2: 1, 9, 14, 17; 4: 1, 13; 5: 1, 4, 12, 14, 25.

12. Cf. Acts 13: 26, etc.

13. This emphasis has been correctly cited by E. G. Selwyn who, however, has gone beyond the evidence in maintaining Carrington's suggestion of a link between Paul's use of *adelphoi* and (more than thirty) elements of the "primitive Christian catechism." Cf., E. G. SELWYN, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*. London: Macmillan, 1946, p. 388.

14. It should be noted that in Phil 4: 8, as well as in 2 Thess 3: 1, *adelphoi* is used in conjunction with *loipon*.

15. Paul ELLINGWORTH-Eugene A. NIDA, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians*. Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1976, p. 74.

16. Carl J. BJERKELUND, *Parakalō: Form, Funktion und Sinn der parakalo-sätze in den paulinischen Briefen*. *Bibliotheca Theologica Norvegica*, 1. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1967.

17. C. J. BJERKELUND, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

18. In this respect, the absence of *parakalō* from Gal is noteworthy.

In the papyri, requests with *parakalō* are often linked with thanksgiving periods, and sometimes make reference to the motivation for the thanksgiving. Requests introduced by *parakalō* are generally of a practical nature. Nonetheless, these concrete requests do not necessarily flow from the main thoughts expressed within the letter. It often happens, then, that the meaning of the *parakalō* requests is almost lost within the context of the letter. The relative independence of the *parakalō* requests from the body of the letter within the Hellenistic epistolary tradition, of which Paul is heir, thus contributes to the difficulty faced by the exegete who attempts an interpretation of 1 Thess 4: 1–12.

Nonetheless, one cannot help but be pleased with the results of Bjerkelund's research, since he has identified a literary formula, examples of which are found in private letters as well as in official documents. Essentially the formula consists of 1) the use of the verb of petition in the first person (*parakalō*); 2) a mention of the recipients; 3) (sometimes) a prepositional phrase; and 4) a request usually expressed in a *hina* clause or an infinitive clause<sup>19</sup>. In private correspondence, the formula often appears in letters between persons who enjoy some parity of status. In official use, the formula typically occurs in diplomatic communications between a king (or other official) and a city which has come under the king's influence but is not yet directly subject to the king. In such cases the use of the *parakalō* formula conveys a request which is not so weak as to be readily neglected or easily refused, yet not so strong as to give offense and cause bitterness. The *parakalō* formula conveys an authoritative request, but lacks the bluntness of a direct order.

Paul does not conceive of himself in regal terms, yet he does claim that he enjoys an ambassadorial capacity with respect to the community of Thessalonica. He has been sent to them as an "apostle of Christ" (2: 6)<sup>20</sup>. Accordingly, Paul enjoys some authority with respect to the Thessalonians, even if he chooses to exercise this authority in a gentle and concerned manner<sup>21</sup>. Within the perspective of his understanding of the way in which he was to exercise apostolic authority over the Thessalonians, the apostle adapted the well-known *parakalō* formula to his own ends. He employed it as a means to convey a sentiment of the authority which he exercises over the community. Bjerkelund has identified a Pauline use of the *parakalō* formula in Rom 12: 1-2; 15: 30-32; 16: 17; 1 Cor 1: 10; 4: 16; 16: 15-16; 2 Cor 10: 1-2. Within 1 Thess it is to be found in 4: 1; 4: 10b; 5: 12; 14. As used by Paul, the *parakalō* formula often appears at a turning point in the development of his thought, particularly when the apostle is about to enter into some form of concrete paranesis.

In Paul's use of the petition formula, we recognize the four traditional elements: the *parakalō*, the recipients, the prepositional phrase, and the content of the request.

19. Cf. C. J. BJERKELUND, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–50.

20. The reader should note the use of the plural *Christou apostoloi* (v. 7 in the Greek text of 1 Thes) and the plural number of the verb *parakaloumen* in 4: 1.

21. Cf. 1 Thess 2: 7–11. On the manner of Paul's acting as an apostle among the Thessalonians, cf. D. DESANTOS, "Energia de caracter y ternura de corazon de San Pablo", *Cultura Biblica* 18 (1961) 26–36; Richard H. DAVIS, *Remembering and Acting: A Study in the Moral Life in Light of 1 Thessalonians*. (Yale Dissertation). Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1971.

But these elements are so stylized by Paul that Graydon Snyder has proposed that the most complete *parakalō* period in Paul contains seven elements: the verb of petition, a transitional particle, a designation of the recipients in accusative, a mention of the recipients in the vocative, citation of his authority, announcement of the topic, and the petition itself<sup>22</sup>.

From the standpoint of analysis of form, however, it seems preferable to retain the identification of the four elements identified by Bjerkelund, but to note that these appear in the Pauline literature as a distinctly Pauline feature. To limit ourselves to 1 Thess, we should first note that the verb of petition is always in the first person plural. Moreover, it is accompanied in each instance by a transitional particle. Secondly, Paul tends to identify those to whom his petition is addressed by making use of *humas*, the personal pronoun in the second person plural, accusative case. The non-descript "you" are, however, further specified by the evocative vocative, *adelphoi*. Thirdly, although Hellenistic literature sometimes employed a prepositional phrase in the *parakalō* formula, Paul has a tendency to employ one of two prepositional phrases. One phrase, using *dia*<sup>23</sup> and the genitive would cite the source of the authority which Paul was exercising; the other, using *huper*<sup>24</sup>, introduces the topic under consideration. Finally, the petition itself was given either by means of the traditional formulas (*hina* clause, infinitive phrase) or in the form of a *hoti* clause.

#### A PASTORAL INTERLUDE

While the elements of the Pauline *parakalō* formula are clearly recognizable in 4: 1, Paul's grammatical construction is somewhat unwieldy<sup>25</sup>. Evidence of the difficult construction of this verse is contained in the critical apparatus of the twenty-sixth edition of Nestle-Aland<sup>26</sup>. Some manuscripts have omitted the first *hina*, whose presence makes the second *hina* redundant. The RSV has dealt with the redundancy by translating only the first *hina* — thus, "... *that* as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, [*hina*] you do so more and more." On the other hand, the majority of the Greek manuscripts and some of the major majuscules (particularly the Sinaiticus, and the Alexandrinus) have omitted the first *hina*. Moreover, the majority of the Greek manuscripts, especially the medieval minuscules, but including an ancient corrector of the Codex Cantabrigiensis, have omitted the "just

22. Cf. G. F. SNYDER, *art. cit.*, pp. 234-235.

23. *Dia* appears in Rom 12: 1; 15: 30; 1 Cor 1: 10; 2 Cor 10: 1. In 1 Thess 4: 1, Paul uses *en*, thereby incorporating the *en kuriō Iēsou* formula into his text. Compare with *dia tou kuriō Iēsou* in v. 2.

24. Cf. Rom 15: 30.

25. Cf. Ellingworth and Nida who have written: "Sometimes Paul's thought is so concise that it is difficult to follow; sometimes it includes repetition for the sake of emphasis. We find both these features in this verse.

"First there is repetition...

"Second, there is a train of thought which is compressed to the point of obscurity." P. ELLINGWORTH — E. A. NIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

26. Kurt ALAND, etc., *Novum Testamentum Graece*. 26<sup>th</sup> ed.: Stuttgart, Deutsches Bibelstiftung, 1979, p. 535.

as you are doing" (*kathōs kai peripateite*) clause. The textual confusion to which these emendations attest has undoubtedly arisen from Paul's desire to say too many things at once. In his enthusiasm, Paul has interrupted the *parakalō* petition with a pastoral parenthesis: "as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing."

This pastoral parenthesis is important in three respects. In the first instance, it reveals that moral exhortation was an integral part of Paul's proclamation to the Thessalonian community<sup>27</sup>. For the apostle, *paranesis* and kerygma went hand in hand. Since Paul's pastoral parenthesis is phrased in general terms, it is impossible for us to determine the specific content of the paranesis which accompanied Paul's preaching of the Gospel at Thessalonica. Undoubtedly his exhortation bore upon matters to which he intends to return at this point in his letter. Two clues suggest, moreover, that the earlier Pauline paranesis contained elements of traditional moral instruction. The clues consist of the verbs found in the pastor's aside. The verb *paralabete* ("you learned"), from *paralambanein*, corresponds to the Hebrew *qibbel*. This is a technical term, used in rabbinic circles in connection with the transmission of traditional material, especially moral instruction<sup>28</sup>. Among the rabbis, *halak* (to walk) indicated one's way of life, so much so that students of rabbinics normally refer to the rabbinic legal and moral tradition as *halakah*. The Greek equivalent of *halak* is *peripatein*, a verb which twice appears in the pastoral parenthesis: "how you ought to live (*peripatein*) and to please God, just as you are doing (*peripateite*)." The use of *peripatein* in this context suggests that Paul is thinking of behavior<sup>29</sup> according to traditional moral standards.

Secondly, the content of Paul's earlier moral exhortation is described in a most comprehensive fashion, namely, "how you ought to live and to please God." These are not two parallel activities; rather, they "are related as means and purpose<sup>30</sup>." What "to please God" really adds to the pastoral parenthesis is a significant perspective. The believer is not one who, by reason of his condition as "a child of the light" (5: 5), is above the demands of traditional moral conduct. Neither is the Christian subject to excessively rigid moral demands. Rather the Christian is one who responds to traditional standards of morality because this is a way for him to please God. These are concomitancy between his turning to God from the worship of idols (1: 9) and right conduct which pleases God. The phrase, "to please God," conveys the thought that the goal of ethical conduct is neither human perfection nor the fulfillment of a moral

27. Cf. Franz LAUB, *Eschatologische Verkündigung und Lebensgestaltung nach Paulus. Eine Aufbau Untersuchung zum Wirken des Apostels beim Aufbau der Gemeinde in Thessalonike. Münchener Universitäts-Schriften*. Regensburg: Pustet, 1973, p. 51.

28. For a specific interpretation of the *paradōsis* language cf 1 Thess, Cf. R. H. DAVIS, *op. cit.*, pp. 183, 250-253.

29. The use of *peripatein* to denote ethico-religious conduct became common in the LXX, even though it is unknown in classical Greek usage. Cf. H. SEESEMAN and G. BERTRAM, *pateo, ktl. TDNT*, 5. Ed. by G. Friedrich and G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968. 940-945, p. 941.

30. P. ELLINGWORTH-E. A. NIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

code<sup>31</sup>; rather it is a religious response to the God-Father who has chosen the believer (1: 5) as his child. In this respect one can speak of Gospel morality as a morality of response<sup>32</sup> or a morality of thanksgiving<sup>33</sup>. God, rather than moral perfection or the human ideal, is the perspective of the believer who endeavors to live in upright fashion.

A third significant element in the pastoral parenthesis relates to the clause "just as you are doing" (*kathōs kai peripateite*). The clause, expressed in the present tense, interrupts again the already interrupted flow of the sentence. Rigaux has suggested that the grammatical difficulties (which led to the omission of the entire clause from a considerable number of the later Greek manuscripts) are due to the fact that the letter had been dictated by the apostle<sup>34</sup>. Despite the grammatical difficulty attendant upon the clause in the pastoral parenthesis, it is clear that Paul does not intend to suggest that the way of life which he is proposing to the Thessalonians is radically different from that which they have been living. Showing good pastoral sense and using a form of *captatio benevolentiae*<sup>35</sup>, Paul has tactfully softened his petition by implicitly encouraging the Thessalonian community to continue along the path of upright conduct that it has already begun to trod.

#### PAUL'S "REQUEST"

The pastoral interlude completed, Paul can return to his main purpose, the exposition of the petition which he is addressing to the Thessalonians. The object of the petition is couched in most general terms, i.e., "that you do so more and more" (*hina perisseuete mallon*). The language is Pauline<sup>36</sup>. The verb has already occurred in 1 Thess 3: 12 where the RSV translators have rendered it as "abound". Once again qualified by the adverb *mallon*, the verb also occurs in 4: 10, where the translators have opted for the translation "to do so more and more." Since Paul has not supplied an object for the verb *perisseuein*, the clause must be taken in a general sense as if Paul is commending the Thessalonians' continued growth and development in a way of life appropriate to their status as "children of the light." Thus one should speak of a dynamic ethic present in the apostle's petition of 1 Thess 4.

In this respect the comments of V.C. Pfitzner seem particularly insightful as well as quite apropos. Pfitzner has written that: "The Apostle can demand growth in the concrete life of his readers..., but what is meant is always progress on a course which

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31. In his article on *parakaleō* in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Otto Schmitz has shown that such passages as Phil 2: 1; 1 Thess 4: 1 (cf. 2 Thess 3: 12); 1 Cor 1: 10; Rom 1: 30; 2 Cor 10: 1; Rom 12: 1 distinguish the exhortation from a merely moral appeal. Cf. O. SCHMITZ, *parakaleō, paraklēsis*, TDNT, 5. 773-795, p. 795.

32. Cf. W. NAUCK, *art. cit.*

33. Cf. C. J. BJERKELUND, *op. cit.*, p. 49; Ceslaus SPICQ, *Vie morale et Trinité sainte selon saint Paul. Lectio divina*, 19. Paris: Cerf, 1967, pp. 31-32; *Théologie morale du Nouveau Testament*, Vol. 1. *Études Bibliques*, Paris: Gabalda, 1965, pp. 133-145. Cf. p. 134, n. 2.

34. He further noted that "a good secretary is necessary" in order that such difficulties be avoided. Cf. B. RIGAU, *op. cit.*, p. 498.

35. The preterition of 4: 9 can likewise be understood in this manner.

36. Cf. 1 Cor 14: 12; 15: 58; 2 Cor 3: 9; 9: 8. Phil 1: 9; 4: 17.



has already begun with the acceptance of the Gospel. This progress includes, of course, growth in sanctification... The task of the believer is to persevere in, and live according to, that which he has received in Christ. In this sense Paul's ethic and the ethic which is expressed by means of the athletic image, is above all a 'Bewährungsethik'; not merely an ethic of maximum exertion<sup>37</sup>."

Paul's petition carries particular weight because it is made "in the Lord Jesus" (*en kuriō Iēsou*). The phrase has been incorporated into the *parakalō* formula. By it Paul underscores the urgency of his petition and the authority under which it is made. The apostle uses the expression in order to emphasize that he is not speaking in his own name, but according to the mandate of the Lord Jesus himself. Given the formulaic character of the phrase, it might be preferable to render the phrase "in the name of Jesus." In such fashion, the delegated nature of Paul's authoritative petition would be brought more clearly into focus<sup>38</sup>.

In v. 2 Paul reiterates the basic thought of v. 1. Paul's authority is evoked once again, this time by the noun *paraggelias*, a word taken from the military register where it normally denotes the orders given by an officier to his men. The term connotes both the authority of the one who gives an order and the obligation (responsibility) of the one to whom the order is given. Nonetheless Paul continues to advance the idea that his is an alien (delegated) authority. The "orders"<sup>39</sup> which he issues are not given on his own authority; they are given on the authority of the Lord Jesus: "through the Lord Jesus"<sup>40</sup>. In urging a positive response to these "orders," Paul reminds the Thessalonians of his previous teaching. His use of the *oidate* ("you know") formula is most comprehensive<sup>41</sup>. It involves a total and vigorous recall of his proclamation and teaching among the Thessalonians. Paul's appeal to the "orders" which he had previously addressed to the Thessalonians clearly indicates that his oral paranesis

37. Victor C. PFITZNER, *Paul and the Agon Motif. Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature. Suppl. N.T.*, 16. Leiden: Brill, 1967, pp. 152-153. A "Bewährungsethik" is equivalent to an ethics of perseverance, i.e., one of consistency and fidelity.

38. Albrecht Oepke and F. Laub claim to find in the *en kuriō Iēsou* formula a reference to the power of the Lord Jesus. Life in response to this petition would then be a sign of one's new being in the Lord. Ernest Best has taken issue with this point of view, even as he does with the view which sees in the phrase an appeal to respond to the indwelling Christ. Cf. A. OEPKE, *Die Missionspredigt des Apostels Paulus*. Leipzig: 1920, ad. hoc. F. LAUB, op. cit., p. 51; E. BEST, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*. BNTC. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1972, p. 156.

39. Cf. 1 Tim 1: 5, 18; 5: 38.

40. Although Best maintain that "through the Lord Jesus" does not appear to be the exact equivalent of "in the Lord Jesus", it is clear that the two expressions are virtually synonymous. Cf. v. Dobschutz, Frame, Dibelius, Voste, Buzy, Rigaux, Laub, Ellingworth-Nida, et al. On the other hand, Heinrich Schlier has suggested that the "instructions" are "through the Lord Jesus" because the will of Jesus is expressed in them. In contrast, Wilhelm Thusing has argued from the "mystical" sense of the *dia kuriō Iēsou* formula to conclude that Paul is suggesting that the exalted Lord is active in his instructions. Such precision seems to me to be neither required nor warranted by the text of Paul's letter. Cf. H. SCHLIER, "Auslegung des 1 Thessalonicherbriefes" (4: 1-12), *Bibel und Leben*, 3 (1962) 240-249, p. 242; W. THUSING, *Per Christum in Deum. Studien zum Verhältnis von Christozentrik und Theozentrik in der paulinischen Hauptbriefen. Neutestamentliche Abhandlung*, N.F. 1. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Munster: Aschendorf, 1969, pp. 164-237.

41. Cf. R. H. DAVIS, op. cit., p. 181.

included concrete directives. Unfortunately we can not now fully determine exactly what those instructions were. They obviously included the themes rehearsed by Paul in the current letter, but it is difficult to be more precise.

#### MORE SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION

The difficulty does not simply result from our lack of precise information as to the Thessalonians' real situation, nor does it stem only from the linguistic problems pertinent to the interpretation of vv. 3-8. Rather, the difficulty comes from the nature of vv. 3-8 and the relationship which exists between these verses and vv. 1-2. Authors such as Martin Dibelius<sup>42</sup>, Wolfgang Schrage<sup>43</sup>, K.G. Eckart<sup>44</sup>, Walter Schmithals<sup>45</sup>, Franz Laub<sup>46</sup>, and Hans-Heinrich Schade<sup>47</sup> have argued that these six verses contain general ethical instruction and that it is therefore impossible to conclude from an analysis of these verses anything specific about the concrete situation of the Thessalonian community. Laub claims to have recognized in vv. 3-8 the formal characteristics of the catalogue of vices and suggests that Paul is simply calling to mind traditional<sup>48</sup> moral teaching. Eckart and Schmithals have even drawn from the purportedly general nature of the exhortation in vv. 3-8 an argument in favor of the view that these verses do not belong to the text to which the rest of 1 Thess 3 belongs<sup>49</sup>.

On the other hand, authors such as J.E. Frame<sup>50</sup>, R.H. Davis<sup>51</sup>, and Graydon Snyder<sup>52</sup> have argued in favor of a specific relationship between the exhortation of

42. Cf. Martin DIBELIUS, *A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*. New York: Scribner's, 1936, p. 39; *An die Thessalonichen I-II. An die Philipper*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1937, 19-20. More generally, on the basis of his extensive studies of paranetic literature, Dibelius cites as one of the two principal characteristics of New Testament paranetic material — the other being the eclectic nature of the materials themselves — that the paranesis fits only loosely into its context, offering the readers general instructions which are already familiar to them. Cf. M. DIBELIUS, — H. GREEVEN, *James. Hermeneia*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976, pp. 3-7.

43. Cf. Wolfgang SCHRAGE, *Die konkrete Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese*. Gutersloh: Mohr, 1961, p. 42.

44. For Eckart, the section is a liturgical paranesis or a paranetic catechism, but in no way is it an epistolary paranesis. Cf. K.G. ECKART, "Der zweite echte Brief des Apostels Paulus an die Thessalonicher", *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 58 (1961) 30-44, esp pp. 35-36.

45. Cf. W. SCHMITHALS, "Die Thessalonicherbriefe als Briefkompositionen", in *Zeit und Geschichte* (Bultmann Festschrift). Tübingen: Mohr, 1964. 295-315.

46. Cf. F. LAUB, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

47. Cf. Hans-Heinrich SCHADE, *Apokalyptische Christologie dei Paulus. Studien zum Zusammenhang von Christologie und Eschatologie in den Paulusbriefen*. Göttingen Theologische Arbeiten, 18. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981, p. 135.

48. For a discussion of the paranesis tradition in 1 Thess 4: 3-8, cf. SCHADE, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-143.

49. Eckart has denied the Pauline authorship of vv. 1-8, while Schmithals maintained that 1 Thess 4: 3 ff. belonged to a different Pauline document from that which contained vv. 1-2. Cf. K. G. ECKART, *art. cit.*; W. SCHMITHALS, *op. cit.*, p. 135; R. F. COLLINS, "Apropos the Integrity of 1 Thess," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 65, (1979) 67-106, pp. 72-73, 89-91.

50. Cf. J. E. FRAME, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*. ICC. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912, pp. 14-15, 145.

51. R. H. DAVIS, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

52. Cf. G. F. SNYDER, "A Summary of Faith in an Epistolary Context. 1 Thess. 1: 9, 10," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1972 Proceedings*. Vol. II. 355-365, p. 361; "Apocalyptic and Didactic Elements in 1 Thessalonians," pp. 236-239.

4: 1-12 and the real-life situation at Thessalonica. Davis acknowledged that, on the sole basis of the parallels which exist between the ethical materials of 1 Thess 4-5 and other ethical documentation, it is difficult to establish that Paul has offered anything more than "general instructions" in the paranetic sections of 1 Thess. However, he has urged that other parallels be considered as well, namely, those which exist between the issues within the community and the teachings which the apostle has delivered. Thus he has admitted the general nature of the formulation of Paul's ethics in 1 Thess, but has opted for its specific applicability to the Thessalonian situation. For his part, Snyder has written that 4: 1-8, "sexual faithfulness," and 4: 9-10a, "love of brother," are general norms, but has specified that the first part of the petition (i.e., vv. 1-2) is general, while the second applies a general ethical norm to a specific situation. Were clarity of interpretation of vv. 3-8 easy to attain, it would be relatively easy to determine whether our passage contains specific or general norms of conduct. Yet such clarity is not to be had, since these verses contain the most problematic *cruces* for the interpreter of 1 Thess.

Since vv. 3-6 constitute one sentence in Greek, 1 Thess 4: 1-12 is normally divided into three parts: a general introduction (vv. 1-2), an instruction on sexual morality (vv. 3-8), and an instruction on brotherly love (vv. 9-12)<sup>53</sup>. At first sight, this seems to reduce the significance of the *parakalō* formula in vv. 10b-11, but this division of the material is both practicable and commonly accepted. In any case, the fact that vv. 3-6 are a single sentence in Greek makes it impossible for us to concur with Adinolfi<sup>54</sup> who has divided 4: 1-8 into three tripartite sections: the prelude (vv. 1-3a, i.e., vv. 1, 2, 3a), the instruction itself (vv. 3b-6a, i.e., vv. 3b, 4-5, 6a), the motivation (vv. 6b-8, i.e., 6b, 7, 8). Adinolfi has noted that sanctification (*hagiasmos*) recurs as a key word in each of the three sections which he has delineated. To be sure, *hagiasmos* does appear three times in the sentence. Its presence assures the unity of a complex (and obtuse) expression of thought, and should not be used as a criterion for dividing the text. While Adinolfi's structuring of vv. 1-8 into three units of three members is a bit *recherchée*, his emphasis on the centrality of the *hagiasmos* theme is quite correct, as was his basic insight into the three parts of the pericope (i.e., vv. 3-6). Its single sentence can be divided as follows: 1) A general statement (v. 3a); 2) the instructions (vv. 3b-6a); and 3) the motivation (v. 6b).

V. 3a presents the general introductory statement: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification (*Touto gar estin thelēma tou theou ho hagiasmos humōn*). "The *touto* ("this") which serves as the subject of the sentence not only introduces the principal clause; it is also directed to the five infinitives which together express the directives of vv. 3b-6. The rabbis, and Paul as a former Jew formed by the rabbis, looked to God's will as the ultimate norm of and motivation for behavior. Paul would have agreed that the will of God is the ultimate ground of all true morality<sup>55</sup>. However, the

53. E.g. E. BEST, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-178; C. J. BJERKELUND, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

54. Cf. Marco ADINOLFI, "La santità del matrimonio in 1 Tess. 4, 1-8," *Rivista biblica italiana* 24 (1976) 165-184, pp. 165-166.

55. Cf. D.E.H. WHITELEY, *The Theology of St. Paul*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970. p. 211.

expression *thelēma tou theou* does not normally have a moralistic sense in the New Testament. Rather, it connotes the sovereign, gratuitous, and salvific will of God, realized in the ministry and exaltation of Jesus <sup>56</sup>.

The Pauline term *hagiasmos* <sup>57</sup>, derived from the verb *hagiazesthai*, is a *nomen actionis*, it designates the process of sanctification rather than the result of the process, for which the New Testament authors reserve the noun *hagiosunē* <sup>58</sup>. In Judaism, "holiness" was attributed primarily to God, for whom holiness was a qualifying and almost supreme quality. The designation was then applied to persons and objects insofar as they belonged to God in some specific sense. The use of the term implied some separation between that which was holy and that which was banal. Such a separation was not beyond Paul's perspective, since he has stated that the behavior appropriate to the Christian way of life is one which should make an impression on "outsiders" (v. 12). Since holiness is consistently used with respect to God and that which belongs to him, it is difficult to take "your sanctification" simply as the object of Paul's moral demand, as if it were a term belonging to the ethical rather than to the religious register <sup>59</sup>. Rather we should consider that "holiness" retains the basic connotation of divine action — in this case that of a divine activity which is manifest in concrete activity on the part of the faithful <sup>60</sup>. What follows, then, in vv. 3b-8 is an exposition of that type of conduct which is a manifestation of the process of sanctification.

This interpretation of v. 3a is not incompatible with that proposed in a study by Calvin Roetzel <sup>61</sup> who held that v. 3a is the first part of a four-part judgment formula. The formula, similar to one employed by the pre-exilic prophets, is frequently used by Paul <sup>62</sup> in pastoral exhortations. In 1 Thess 4, the four-part formula consists of: 1) an introduction (v. 3a); 2) the offense (vv. 3b-6); 3) the punishment (v. 7b); and 4) the hortatory conclusion (v. 8). The "offense" corresponds to the concrete directives which Paul addressed to the Thessalonian community in vv. 3b-6. Whether

56. Cf. M. ADINOLFI, *art. cit.*, p. 167; R.F. COLLINS, "Thy Will be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven", *The Bible Today* 14 (1964) 911-917; Raymond E. BROWN, "The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer", *Theological Studies* 22 (1961) 175-208. rp. in *New Testament Essays*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1965, 275-320, pp. 297-301. Rigaux has indicated that there exists a point of contact between Paul's use of the will of God theme (1 Thess 4: 3; 5: 18) and the Lord's Prayer. If this is indeed the case, then *thelēma tou theou* of 4: 3 has a "theological" rather than a "moral" sense. Cf. B. RIGAU, "Vocabulaire chrétien antérieur à la première épître aux Thessaloniens," in *Sacra Pagina* II; BETL, 12. Ed. by J. Coppens, A. Descamps, and E. Massaux. Gembloux: Duculot, 1959. 380-389, pp. 382, 388.

57. In the NT, *hagiasmos* is found only in Rom 6: 19, 22; 1 Cor 1: 30 1 Thess 4: 3, 4, 7; 2 Thess 2: 13; 1 Tim 2: 15; Heb 12: 14; 1 Pet 1: 2.

58. Rom 1: 4; 2 Cor 7: 1; Thess 3: 13.

59. Econtra, Martin Sanchez has proffered the opinion that Paul supposes the Ten Commandments as the means of sanctification. Cf. Benjamin Martin SANCHEZ, "El capítulo cuarto de la primera Epístola a los Tesalonicenses," *Cultura Bíblica* 17 (1960) 351-354, p. 351.

60. B. RIGAU, *op. cit.*, p. 501.

61. Cf. C. ROETZEL, "The Judgment Form in Paul's Letters," *JBL* 88 (1969) 305-312, pp. 306-307.

62. As identified by Roetzel, the formula has been used by the apostle in 1 Cor 3: 16-17; Gal 6: 7-10; 1 Cor 10: 1-14; 11: 17-34; Rom 1: 18-32; 2 Thess 1: 5-12; 1 Cor 5: 1-13; Gal 1: 6-9; 2 Thess 2: 1-8; Gal 5: 18-26. Although the use of the form admits of some variation, the form has been employed by Paul in Thess 4: 2-8 "in a very straightforward way."

these concrete directives are specific or general remains to be seen. What is patently clear is that the concrete directives are given in a series of infinitive clauses, whose relationship with one another is not immediately evident: that you abstain (*apechesthai*) from immorality, that each one of you know (*eidenai*) how to take (*ktasthai*) a wife... that no man transgress (*huperbainein*) and wrong (*pleonektein*) his brother..."

The first "offense" cited by the apostle is "immorality" (*porneia*). The apostle exhorts the community to "abstain from immorality." Abstain (*apechesthai*) may well have been used as a technical term in early Christian paranesis, conveying the idea that Christians should live differently from pagans who do not know God (v. 5b) and are consequently presumed to live a decadent life. Paul surely considered "sexual immorality" (*porneia*) to be characteristic of the pagan way of life<sup>63</sup>. His paranesis repeatedly focuses on chastity and sexual misconduct<sup>64</sup>. Nevertheless one must ask a question as to the point of Paul's exhortation in v. 3b. *Porneia* can have the restricted sense of fornication and some authors have taken the *porneia* of v. 3b in this limited sense<sup>65</sup>. A different point of view has been taken by some authors<sup>66</sup> who note that *porneia* sometimes occurs in passages aimed at Christian proselytizing or instruction<sup>67</sup> and thus understand the *porneia* of v. 3b in the sense of that form of sexual misconduct [incest] prohibited by Lev 18:6-23<sup>68</sup>. Finally, *porneia* can have the general sense of sexual immorality and thus many authors have taken the *porneia* of v. 3b to mean wanton sexual behavior (including fornication)<sup>69</sup>. The interpretative

63. Cf. H. SCHLIER, *art. cit.*, p. 243; E. BEST, *op. cit.*, p. 160; H.-H. SCHADE, *op. cit.*, pp. 135, 270, n. 151. Schade cites 1 Cor 5: 9 ff. as the principal witness to this point of view. Cf. Rom 1: 24-27. In this respect it should be noted that some pagan cultic practices include forms of sexual behaviour deemed to be immoral according to the traditional standards of Judaism, and even according to those of some Hellenistic ethical systems. Cf. 1 Q S 4: 10.

64. Cf. Rom 1: 28-29 (cf. vv. 24-27); 1 Cor 5: 1-13; 6: 13, 18; 2 Cor 12: 21; Gal 5: 19; [Eph 5: 3; Col 3: 5].

65. E.g., D.E.H. Whiteley, who cites 2 Cor 12: 21; Gal 5: 19; and Col 3: 5 as other passages in which *porneia* is to be taken in the sense of fornication.

66. E.g., Bruce MALINA, "Does *Porneia* mean Fornication?," *Novum Testamentum* 14 (1972) 10-17, pp. 11-13.

67. Acts 15: 20, 29; 21: 25; 1 Cor 10: 8; Heb 13: 4 and 1 Thess 4: 3.

68. This passage of the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) contains one of the six injunctions of the Law of Moses binding the sojourners in Israel. Cf. Heinrich BALTENWEILER, "Erwagungen zu 1 Thess. 4, 3-8," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 19 (1963) 1-13, pp. 8-9; *Die Ehe im Neuen Testament. Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, 52. Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1967, pp. 141-143.

Although Snyder has proposed that 4: 1-8 propose a general norm of "sexual faithfulness", he has interpreted the norm in connection with the so-called Noachic code. The rabbis, however, linked this aspect of the Noachic code to the precepts of Lev 18. Cf. G. F. SNYDER, "Apocalyptic and Didactic Elements...", p. 238; "A Summary of Faith...", p. 361.

69. Thus RIGAU, *op. cit.*, p. 502; BEST, *op. cit.*, p. 160; SCHLIER, *art. cit.*, p. 243; F. LAUB, *op. cit.*, p. 53; P. Ellington-E. A. NIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 78; and Joseph JENSEN, "Does *porneia* mean Fornication? A critique of Bruce Malina", *Novum Testamentum* 20 (1978) 161-184, p. 180. Although Malina has opted for a specific connotation of *porneia* in 1 Thess 4: 3, his general conclusion was that "*porneia* means unlawful sexual conduct, or unlawful conduct in general," rather than "fornication" in the limited sense of contemporary parlance. Malina's general thesis has been subject to rigorous scrutiny by J. JENSEN (*art. cit.*) and John J. O'ROURKE, "Does the New Testament Condemn Sexual Intercourse Outside Marriage?", *Theological Studies* 37 (1976) 478-479.

efforts of some witnesses<sup>70</sup> within the manuscript tradition confirm that *porneia* is to be taken in its most general sense in v. 3b. Paul has simply exhorted the Christian community at Thessalonica to abstain from that type of sexual misconduct typically found among the pagans.

#### A PROBLEM OF TRANSLATION

Paul's thought becomes more specific in v. 4, but the interpretation of the verse is fraught with difficulty. To a large extent the difficulties arise from questions as to the meaning of the various terms. The translations of v. 4 offered by the RSV and the NEB highlight the ambiguity of Paul's vocabulary. The RSV has rendered the verse "that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor," whereas the NEB has offered the following interpretation: "Each one of you must learn to gain mastery over his body, to hallow and honor it." The crux of the problem is the interpretation of the noun *skeuos*. In its literal, but general, sense *skeuos* means "object" or "thing"<sup>71</sup>. In a more specific sense, *skeuos* means "vessel", "jar", "dish". When *skeuos* is used in its general literal sense, its meaning is often specified by means of the context or through the addition of a qualifying statement. Thus *skeuos* frequently means "instrument" or "equipment". However, *skeuos* can also be employed in a figurative sense. Thus it can bear the connotation of "body", "wife", or "male sexual organ". In the New Testament, *skeuos* appears some twenty-two times<sup>72</sup>, of which seven<sup>73</sup> have been identified as figurative uses in the fifth (revised) edition of Moulton-Geden<sup>74</sup>. The term is rarely used by Paul<sup>75</sup>, but when it is used it is always used in the figurative sense<sup>76</sup>. The question then becomes: which of the metaphorical senses is appropriate to the interpretation of v. 4<sup>77</sup>? Part of the problem is that nowhere else in the New Testament is *skeuos* used metaphorically without further qualification<sup>78</sup>.

Throughout the centuries commentators have been divided in their opinions as to the meaning of *skeuos*. Some have always opted for the connotation "wife" thus preparing for the translation found in the RSV. Among the Patristic and medieval commentators who have chosen this interpretation, one can cite Theodore of

70. For example, both the second corrector of the Codex Sinaiticus and a corrector of the ninth century Codex Boernerianus have added *pasēs* ("all") as a qualification of *porneias*. *Pasēs* is also found in Y (8th or 9th century), F (ninth century) and a few minuscules, including 104 and 365.

71. Cf. W.F. ARNDT-F.W. GINGRICH, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 2nd ed.: Chicago, University of Chicago, 1979, pp. 761-762.

72. Mt 12: 29; Mk 3: 27; 11: 16; Lk 8: 16; 17: 31; Jn 19: 29; Acts 9: 15; 10: 11, 16; 11: 5; 27: 17; Rom 9: 21, 22, 23; 2 Cor 4: 7; 1 Thes 4: 4; 2 Tim 2, 20, 21; Heb 9: 21; 1 Pet 3: 7; Rev 2: 27; 18: 12.

73. I.e. Acts 9: 15; Rom 9: 22, 23; 2 Cor 4: 7; 1 Thess 4: 4; 2 Tim 2: 21; 1 Pet 3: 7.

74. W.F. MOULTON-A.S. GEDEN, *A Concordance to the Greek New Testament*. 5th rev. ed.: Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978, p. 895.

75. Rom 9: 21, 22, 23; 2 Cor 4: 7; 1 Thes 4: 4. Cf. 2 Tim 2: 20, 21; Heb 9: 21.

76. Except in Rom 9: 21, where, however, the whole verse functions as a simile or parable.

77. Cf. Raymond R. RICKARDS, "1 Thessalonians 4: 4-6." *The Bible Translator* 29 (1978) 245-247.

78. Cf. P. ELLINGTON-E.A. NIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

Mopsuestia, John Damascene, Augustine, and Aquinas. Among the more recent interpreters who support this interpretation have been Hofmann, Lünemann, Bornemann, v. Dobschütz, Wohlenberg, Frame, Toussaint, Oepke, Rinaldi, Best, Nieder, Marxsen, Vogel, Schürmann, Schlier, Friedrich, Laub, and Adinolfi. On the other hand, there have always been interpreters who have favored the connotation "body" (or person) — thus allowing for the NEB translation. Among the Fathers and medieval authors, one can cite John Damascene, Theophylactus, Tertullian, Pelagius, Cajetan, Calvin and Theodore de Bèze. Recent commentators who have chosen "body" as the meaning of the term include Dibelius, Rigaux, Bahnsen, Martin Sanchez, Wolniewicz, Merk, Rossano, and Schade who notes that a "decisive choice is not quite possible". Fewer authorities have opted for an interpretation of *skeuos* as a euphemistic designation of the penis, yet this point of view is reflected in the NAB which has rendered our troublesome verse in this fashion: "each of you guarding his member in sanctity and honor"<sup>79</sup>.

This third interpretation of *skeuos* in a figurative sense does not have in its favor as heavy a weight of tradition as do the "wife" and "body" interpretations. Moreover, this use of *skeuos* is not otherwise attested within the New Testament. This relative silence may well be the strongest argument in favor of the acceptance of the view adopted by the NAB. The euphemism of the metaphor and the infrequency of use attest to the obscurity of *skeuos* in this sense and occasion the wide range of efforts undertaken in an effort to bring some clarity to the interpretation of v. 4. For the rest, an argument in favor of *skeuos*-penis opinion is that the Hebrew equivalent of *skeuos* contained in 1 Sam 21 : 5 seems likewise<sup>80</sup> to be a guarded reference to the penis.

Among the arguments advanced in favor of the *skeuos*-body option are: 1) a limited number of NT parallels, especially 2 Cor 4 : 7, but also including 1 Pet 3 : 7 and perhaps 2 Tim 2 : 21; 2) the witness of a relatively significant number of Greek Fathers; 3) the fact that among some of the Greek philosophers, the body is considered to be the instrument of the soul<sup>81</sup>; 4) the general tenor of the parallel injunctions in v. 3 and 5, which would seem to imply that the intervening topic should also be of general rather than limited application (i.e., as if the injunction were addresses only to those who are married); and 5) the parallelism between 1 Thess 4 : 4 and 1 Cor 6 : 12-20<sup>82</sup>.

79. Cf. James F. REESE, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Wilmington: Michael Glazer, 1979, p. 44; J. WHITTON, "A Neglected Meaning for *skeuos* in 1 Thessalonians 4 : 4," *New Testament Studies* 28 (1982) 142-143.

80. Cf. G. BRESSAN, *Samuele*. Turin-Rome, 1954, pp. 344-345; E. DHORME, *Premier livre de Samuel*, Bruges, 1966, p. 889; H.W. HERTZBERG, *Samuel*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964, p. 177, n.c.

81. This understanding also seems to be reflected in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Mand.*, 5.

82. This last argument has been most vigorously advanced by Rigaux (p. 506). Cf. D. BUZY, *Première Épître aux Thessaloniciens. La Sainte Bible*, 12. Paris: Letouzey, 1946, p. 155; Marian WOLNIEWICZ, "'Ut sciat unusquisque vestrum vas suum possidere...' 1 Thess. 4,4," *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne* 10 (1963) 111-118, p. 117.

In my opinion, the arguments in favor of the *skeuos*-wife option are somewhat stronger. They are principally: 1) the possible parallel in 1 Pet 3: 7; 2) the witness of ancient and modern authorities; 3) the use of *heautou* (“one’s own”); 4) the meaning of *ktasthai*; and 5) extra-biblical parallels, particularly among the rabbis. Among these several arguments, the last two are particularly weighty. A number of rabbinic texts use *keli*, the equivalent of *skeuos*, to indicate a woman. Most commonly modern authors refer to a passage in the Babylonian Talmud, which contains a midrash on Est 1: 10 attributed to Rabat (d. 352)<sup>83</sup>. The tradition recalls that: “Some say that Medes are more beautiful, while others say that Persians are more beautiful. Then Assuerus said: The *keli* which I use is neither a Mede nor a Persian. Do you want to see her? Yes, they answered, provided that she’s naked.” Similar uses of *keli* in the sense of woman, and always with sexual overtones, can be found in the Talmudic tractates Pesikta (98b), Sanhedrin (22b), and Taanith (20 ab).

*Ktasthai* means to “procure for oneself”, “acquire”, “get”<sup>84</sup>. It generally has an ingressive sense<sup>85</sup>. Hence it is difficult to comprehend what the expression “to acquire one’s own body” could possibly mean<sup>86</sup>. On the other hand, *ktasthai gunaika* (“to acquire a woman”) is a rather well known expression<sup>87</sup>. It corresponds to the Hebrew idiom *ba’al ishah*. This Hebrew expression is found in the Old Testament, both in the sense of getting married (Dt. 22: 13; 24: 1; Ru 4: 5) and engaging in sexual relationships (Is 54: 1). If indeed *ktasthai skeuos* is the metaphorical equivalent of *ba’ al ishah*, 1 Thess 4: 4 can easily be understood as conveying the thought that “each one live in a sexually active way with his own wife.”

Taken in this sense, v. 4 reflects a Pauline thought which the apostle later developed in response to an inquiry coming from the Corinthian community (1 Cor 7: 1–7). There Paul would urge marriage and underscore the importance of sexual relationships within the marital context. There, too, Paul would reflect on the danger of *porneia* (1 Cor 7: 2). In sum, it would seem that 1 Thess 4: 4 is not without significant parallel in the Pauline correspondence, but that the pertinent parallel is not 1 Cor 6: 12–20. Rather it is 1 Cor 7: 1–7.

One might then ask whether Paul’s thought in 1 Thess 4: 4 contains both an exhortation to marriage (cf. 1 Cor 7: 2b) and an exhortation on the proper use of sexual relationships within marriage (cf. 1 Cor 7: 3–6), or whether Paul intended to

83. Megilla 12b. Cf. M. DIBELIUS, *An die Thessalonichen I-II. An die Philipper*. p. 21; M. ADINOLFI, *art. cit.*, p. 171; B. RIGAUX, *op. cit.*, p. 504; H.L. STRACK-P. BILLERBECK, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*. Vol. III. Munich: Beck, 1926, p. 632.

84. Cf. W.F. ARNDT-F.W. GINGRICH, *op. cit.*, p. 243; M. ADINOLFI, *art. cit.*, p. 172. Ellington and Nida have commented: “The word translated *live with* implies actually an act of taking possession or of acquiring, and not merely the state of having or possessing.” P. ELLINGWORTH-E.A. NIDA, *op. cit.*, —, 78.

85. Rigaux, who opted for *skeuos* = body, argued that the basic idea of *ktasthai* is “possess”, but added that there is a nuance of taking possession. Cf B. RIGAUX, *op. cit.*, pp. 505-506.

86. Cf. H. SCHILIER, *art. cit.*, p. 243. Those commentators who opt for the *skeuos* = body interpretation generally take *ktasthai* in the sense of “to acquire mastery” over one’s self; but the use of the verb in this sense does not seem to be attested elsewhere.

87. Cf. Sir 36: 24; Ru 4: 5; XENOPHON, *Conviv.* II, 10.



express only one of these notions. Heinrich Schlier has suggested that Paul had both ideas in mind as he wrote 1 Thes 4: 4, namely, that each one take a wife and that each one maintain his wife in holiness and respect<sup>88</sup>. Schlier has, in effect, implied that Paul's thought is elliptically expressed in v. 4. This may well be the case but it is not necessarily so.

Part of the confusion — aside from the meaning of such terms as *skeuos* and *ktasthai* — stems from the presence of two infinitives in v. 4, *eidenai* ("to know") and *ktasthai* ("to acquire"). What is the meaning of *eidenai* and what is the relationship between the two verbs. Is the second infinitive of v. 4, *ktasthai* (the third in the succession of five infinitives in vv. 3–6), parallel to or dependent on the first? Given the absence of a connective particle between the infinitives, it is preferable to take *ktasthai* as dependent on *eidenai*. In accordance with frequently attested use, *eidenai* followed by another infinitive means "know how to". Thus one should reject that interpretation of *eidenai* which looks to its appearance in 5: 12<sup>89</sup>, where it has the sense of respect, and find a similar meaning in v. 4: 4. Likewise to be rejected is that interpretation which would see in Paul's use of *eidenai* a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Although the Hebrew verb *yahad* ("to know") frequently has a sexual connotation in the Bible, Biblical Greek has chosen to render this use of *yahad* by *ginoskai* rather than by *eidenai*.

In sum, the phrase *eidenai ekaston humon to heautou skeuos ktasthai* should be rendered "each one of you know how to live with his wife in holiness and honor."

Yet this interpretation of the Greek text does not resolve all the problems of interpretation of v. 4.

It has been objected<sup>90</sup> that an interpretation of v.4 which is of application only to the marital situation is too restrictive for the context, vv. 3–6, which proclaims a general norm on chastity. Such reasoning seems not to have taken into serious enough consideration a reflection on the *Sitz-im-Leben* in which the first letter to the Thessalonians was written. Within the Hellenistic world, unmarried adults were few in number. It was not until the times of the Christian emperors that laws regarding childless persons and bachelors were repealed<sup>91</sup>. Within the Jewish world, bachelorhood was viewed as an unnatural state. The Talmud can be quoted to the effect that "It is not he who marries who sins; the sinner is the unmarried man who spends all his days in sinful thought<sup>92</sup>" or, again, "He who has no wife is not a proper man<sup>93</sup>." Thus the state of marriage would seem to be the normal situation of those to whom Paul addressed his remarks in 1 Thess.

88. Cf. H. SCHLIER, *art. cit.*, p. 243.

89. Arndt-Gingrich noted that "*eidenai tina* also means *take an interest in someone, care for someone.*" W.F. ARNDT-F.W. GINGRICH, *op. cit.*, p. 559.

90. Among others, by Rigaux. Cf. B. RIGAU, *op. cit.*, p. 506.

91. *Codex Theod.* VIII, 16,1 (March 31, 320). Cf. J.M. FORD, "St. Paul the Philogamist. 1 Cor VII in Early Patristic Exegesis," *NTS* 11 (1964-1965) 326–348, p. 348.

92. *Kid* 29b. Cf. Ben-Zion SCHERESCHESKY, "Marriage," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 11. Jerusalem: Keter, 1971, 1025–1051, col. 1028.

93. *Yev.* 63a.

Among the Jews, it was commonly understood that the first of the 113 commandments was found in Gen 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply". Hence the adult single person who remained unmarried was held in dishonor and disrepute. Paul, the former rabbi, would have been heir to that tradition. Snyder's statement to the effect that the first petitions of 4:1-12 are "patently basic Jewish ethics<sup>94</sup>" may be an overstatement of the facts, or perhaps an overestimation of the evidence, but there can be little doubt that there is a basic Jewish tone to the paranesis of 4:1-12. We have already noted the use of *paradidōmi* ("we gave") which reflects the technical language (*masar-qibbel*) of the rabbinic schools. *Peripatein* ("how to live") reflects the Jewish ethical concern for correct *halakah*. The strange expression *skeuos ktasthai* seems to reflect the Hebrew idiom *ba'al ishah* found in some biblical books. *Thelēma tou theou* ("the will of God") served as a guide to and a motivation for correct behaviour among faithful Jews. In late Judaism, God's will was a major religious motive<sup>95</sup>. In the apologetics of Hellenistic Judaism, it served to separate those who knew God and his will from the pagans who did not know God and who lived a life which corresponded to their abysmal ignorance<sup>96</sup>. Moreover, one may correctly speak of a Jewish quality which pervades the entire first letter to the Thessalonians. Certainly elements from the missionary discourse of the Hellenistic Jewish synagogue have entered into 1 Thess 1:9:10. Given the general Jewish character of the whole letter, the contrast between Paul's community and the pagans in v. 5, and the pericope's reflection of rabbinic halakhic language, it seems difficult to escape the conclusion that Paul's paranesis in 1 Thess 4:1-12 (at least thus far) has been strongly influenced by the ethical tradition of the rabbinism to which he was heir. The manifest Judaism of the pericope makes it highly unlikely that Paul would have construed his readership in other than the married condition.

Within the interpretation which has been proposed the *heautou* ("one's own") of v. 4 makes full sense. For those who have adopted the *skeuos*-body position, the reflexive is very problematic since it is difficult to understand in what sense Paul would be petitioning each of the Thessalonian Christians "to acquire *his own* body". The RSV, opting for the *skeuos*-wife interpretation but holding for a specificity which points to the beginning of marriage, has included the problematic vocable in its translation in this fashion: "that each one of you know how to take a wife *for himself* in holiness and honor". Years ago Willy Vogel argued that any understanding of v. 4 must take the problematic possessive pronoun *heautou* into full consideration. His own solution<sup>97</sup>, based on parallels in Xenophon and Plutarch, was to see in Paul's use of the pronoun a contrast between the way of life of the Thessalonian Christians and those of the pagans. Whereas the rich and powerful wooed their women with

94. Cf. G.F. SNYDER, "A Summary of Faith...", p. 351.

95. This point was recently made by Th. Korteweg in a paper, "De Wil van God als Religieuze Voorstelling in laat-Joodse en vroeg-Christelijke Geschriften," at the annual meeting of the Conventus for New Testament Studies, Utrecht, May 25, 1981.

96. Cf. Wis 13-14; Rom 1; 1 Pet 4:1-6; etc.

97. Cf. W. VOGEL, "Eidenai to heautou skeuos ktasthai. Zur Deutung von I Thess 4,3 ff. im Zusammenhang der paulinischen Eheauffassung," *Theologische Blätter* 13 (1934) 83-85.

gifts, the Thessalonian Christians were urged to make their wives more receptive to themselves in holiness and honor : i.e., to win them over by holiness and respect. Another solution, and that which seems most logical (pending, however, the exegesis of v. 6) is that which sees Paul addressing himself to the situation of marriage *ad intra* in vv. 4-5, and marriage *ad extra* in v. 6 : the Christian must be concerned about his own marriage and must respect his wife ; likewise he must be concerned about his neighbor's marriage and respect his brother's wife.

Reflecting on the Christian husband's relationship with his own wife, Paul contrasts the holiness and honor (*en hagiasmo kai timē*) of the believer with the "passion of lust" (*en pathei epithumias*) of the non-believer. Believers are qualified by the now familiar epithet, "brethren" (*adelphoi*), whereas non-believers are cited as those who do not know God. In his letter to the Romans (1 : 18-32), the apostle will later give his own reflected version of the classical Jewish theme<sup>98</sup> of the immorality of the pagans. Now he merely observes that their sexual lives are characterized by the "passion of lust".

Paul's language reflects that of the Stoic philosophers who considered desire (*epithumia*) to be one of the four major movements of the soul, along with pleasure (*hēdonē*), fear (*phobos*) and grief (*lupē*). Among the Stoics, desire was distinct from the wish of the will (*boulēsis*). Desire was subrational or irrational. It escaped domination by human reason and was therefore considered immoral *per se*. The Stoics<sup>99</sup> also considered passion, to which was normally attributed a sexual connotation, as evil because it was opposed to reason. In this understanding, they were followed by Cicero, Josephus<sup>100</sup> and Paul whose "passion of lust" (*pathos epithumias*) is the epitome of sexual misconduct. Paul's moral horizon is not, however, human reason : rather it is God's will. In Paul's view the passion of lust is immoral not because it is irrational but because it is contrary to holiness and the will of God. Accordingly the Christian who knows God and acts in accordance with his will and holiness will not treat his wife according to the passion of lust ; rather he will hold her in holiness and honor.

While holiness readily suggests conduct appropriate to one who belongs to God and/or conduct in accordance with the holy will of God, we must not overlook the fact that *hagiasmos* is a *nomen actionis*. In 1 Cor 7 : 14, Paul exposts the idea that sanctification is realized in marriage<sup>101</sup>. In 1 Thess 4 : 4 he suggested the idea for the first time. If the Christian fashion of living asexual relationship within marriage is a medium of God's sanctifying activity, it also implies that a man treat his wife with honor and respect<sup>102</sup>. Since holiness invokes a relationship with God and honor

98. Wis 14 : 22-30 ; 2 En 10 : 4-6.

99. For Zeno, cf. DIOGENES LAERTIUS, VII, 1, 63 ; PLUTARCH, *De virtute morali*, 10.

100. Cf. CICERO, *Tusculanae disputationes* 4, 11 ; JOSEPHUS, *Contra Ap.*, I, 24.

101. Rigaux, who has chosen the *skeuos* = body option, noted that the person who abstains from immorality "participates in the holiness of God and the Holy Spirit." Cf. B. RIGAU, *op. cit.*, p. 506. The *skeuos* = wife option suggests that it is the marriage itself which shares in the sanctification effected by the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 7 : 14 confirms Paul's understanding of the dynamic sanctification of the marriage of believers.

102. Adinolfi sees in this expression an indication that the wife has the "same dignity as her husband," Cf. M. ADINOLFI, *art. cit.*, p. 178.

suggests a relationship among human beings, Ellingworth and Nida have suggested as a translation of v. 4: "each man should behave towards his wife in a way which is right before God and before people" (or in the eyes of God and the eyes of people)<sup>103</sup>. They are right on target.

#### MORE AMBIGUITY

In v. 6a, "that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter," Paul introduces a new topic but once again the interpreter is confronted by a number of difficulties which do not easily admit of a solution. The difficulties are suggested by the editors of the RSV who have offered, in footnote, an alternative translation, i.e., "defraud his brother in business". The NEB has rendered the problematic verse "and no man must do his brother wrong in this matter" while the NAB offers "and that each refrain from overreaching or cheating his brother in the matter at hand". Briefly stated, the issue is whether Paul has addressed the issues of chastity and justice or whether he was concerned with two aspects of a single topic, namely chastity.

Once again the exegetes are divided among themselves. A good number of modern commentators, including, von Dobschütz, Dibelius, Schlier, Merk, Wiederkehr, Laub, Beauvery, Marxsen, and Schade, believe that Paul is warning against greed in v. 6b. Other authors, of similar stature, hold that Paul is still pondering the virtue of chastity. This second group of exegetes include Rigaux, Maurer, Klaar, Baltensweiler, Martin Sanchez, Henneken, Grill, Rossano<sup>104</sup>, Best, Friedrich, Adinolfi, and Rickards. The ambivalence of Paul's expression is attested by the current translations of the verse. RSV reads "that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter", but offers "defraud his brother in business" as an alternative translation in the footnotes. The NEB adopts a similar position, incorporating the translation "and no man must do his brother wrong in this matter, or invade his rights", while relegating "must overreach is brother in his business" (or "in lawsuits") to the footnotes. The NAB, in contrast, has tried to maintain the ambiguity of Paul's own language by suggesting the translation "that each refrain from overreaching or cheating his brother in the matter at hand."

The crux of the matter of interpretation is two-fold, namely, the meaning of the expressions "in this matter" (*en tō pragmati*) and "transgress and wrong" (*hyperbainein kai pleonektein*). In fact, the principal factor is the interpretation of the verbal expression. The task is not as simple as it might seem at first sight since the first of the verbs is hapax in the NT, and the second occurs rarely in Paul and is found nowhere else in the NT<sup>105</sup>. *Hyperbainein* ("transgress") literally means "to go beyond", but it can also be used with a wide sweep of figurative meanings, ranging from "transgress"

103. Cf. P. ELLINGWORTH-E.A. NIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

104. Piero Rossano has, in fact, changed his opinion as to the interpretation of the verse. In an earlier article (1954) he opted for the commercial interpretation, whereas in his commentary (1965) he argued for the sexual connotation. Cf. P. ROSSANO, "De conceptu *pleonexia* in N.T.," *Verbum Domini* 32 (1954) 262-265; *Lettere ai Tessalonicesi. La Sacra Bibbia*. Turin: Marietti, 1965, p. 96.

105. 2 Cor 2: 11; 7: 2; 12: 17, 18; 1 Thess 4: 6.

to “neglect”. As used by Paul in v. 6a, the sense of *huperbainein* is completed and specified by *pleonektein*. The basic meaning of the verb is “to cheat”. What is its reference? The answer is “*en tō pragmati*” — in this matter.

Of itself, *pragma* has a rather simple meaning, namely, that which is done : i.e., deed, thing, event, occurrence <sup>106</sup>. It is the context which gives greater specificity to the vocable. At this point, some authors <sup>107</sup> make note of the fact that the Pauline corpus includes ten instances in which a cognate of *pleonektein* is used — the verbal adjective *pleonektēs* <sup>108</sup> four times, and the noun *pleonexia*, six times <sup>109</sup>. In all but two instances <sup>110</sup>, the cognate of *pleonektein* is used alongside of *porneia* or one of its cognates, as if Paul inclined to differentiate *porneia* and *pleonexia* <sup>111</sup>. On the basis of this distinction, *huperbainein kai pleonektein* could be rendered “to wrong and defraud”. Then *en tō pragmati* can be rendered «in business matters», the definite article being taken in a general, almost distributive, sense and the noun *pragma* having a commercial connotation <sup>112</sup>. According to this view, Paul would have spoken about two important moral virtues in vv. 3–6a, namely chastity and justice <sup>113</sup>.

However, the unity of the context <sup>114</sup> militates strongly against the view which sees greed as a second offense <sup>115</sup> about which Paul instructs the Thessalonian community

106. W.F. ARNDT-F.W. GINGRICH, *op. cit.*, p. 703.

107. E.G. Robert BEAUVÉRY, “*Pleonektein* in I Thess. 4, 6a,” *Verbum Domini* 33 (1955) 78–85.

108. 1 Cor 5: 10, 11; 6: 10; Eph 5: 5.

109. Rom 1: 28; 2 Cor 9: 5; Eph 4: 19; 5: 3; Col 3: 5; 1 Thess 2: 6.

110. 1 Thes 2: 6; 2 Cor 9: 5.

111. Schade describes *porneia* and *pleonexia* as the two major sins of the pagans. Cf. H.-H. SCHADE, *op. cit.*, p. 135, F. LAUB, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

112. Willi Marxsen has drawn his readers attention to the general language of v. 6a, but notes that Paul is speaking about “getting rich” and concludes that the verse must be interpreted within that perspective. Cf. W. MARXSEN, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher. Zürcher Bibelkommentare*. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1979, p. 61.

113. Ragnar Asting held that the apostle traditionally paired the two vices, sexual immorality and injustice, to such an extent that v. 6a is, in fact, Paul’s addition to his instruction on sexual immorality. Cf. R. ASTING, *Die Heiligtum im Urchristentum. FRLANT*, 46. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1930, p. 220.

114. Heinrich Baltensweiler has argued vigorously on behalf of the unity of vv. 3–8. Yet he has advanced a singular interpretation of these verses which allow him to see in them both a teaching on sexuality and a warning against monetary fraud. He believes that Paul was addressing himself to a particular case, one that arose as a result of Greek inheritance customs. When a man died without a male heir, the daughter inherited the property, but the father’s next of kin had the first right to her hand in order to continue the family. The marriage between an uncle and a niece which would have taken place in accordance with this custom would have been judged to be incestuous (thus, *porneia*) according to the Jewish tradition. In vv. 3–5, Paul warns against such incestuous unions. Then in v. 6a, Paul turns his attention to the legal disputes (*en tō pragmati*) which arose with respect to the inheritance. Several arguments against Baltensweiler have been advanced by E. Best, but Mario Adinolfi admits at least the possibility of Baltensweiler’s interpretation — if there were such cases. In my judgment, the existence of such cases within the Thessalonian community has not yet been established. Cf. H. BALTENSWEILER, *art. cit.*, *op. cit.*; E. BEST, *op. cit.*, p. 164; M. ADINOLFI, “Le frodi di 1 Tess. 4, 6a e l’epiclerato,” *Bibbia e Oriente* 18 (1976) 29–38.

115. On two occasions Adinolfi has subjected the commercial interpretation of v. 6a to careful scrutiny. In each instance he has concluded that Paul’s principal concern is sexual morality. Cf. M. ADINOLFI, *art. cit.*, and “Etica ‘commerciale’ e motivi paretetici in 1 Tess. 4, 1–8,” *Bibbia e Oriente* 19 (1977) 9–20.

in vv. 3–6. In Greek, the four verses constitute but a single sentence. Granted that the first three infinitives are positively expressed, while the infinitives of v. 6 are qualified by a negative particle, but Paul is not disinclined to use *contradictio* in his writing and in fact does so frequently throughout 1 Thes. Moreover, *hagiasmos* ("holiness") serves as a unifying leitmotif of the entire sentence. The unity of Paul's thought is further emphasized by his use of "immorality" (*porneia*) and *akatharsia* ("uncleanness") which function as the literary device of *inclusio* within the body of the sentence. With so many indications of the unity of Paul's thought, one should conclude that vv. 3–8 consider a single topic, namely, chastity. That this is indeed the case is confirmed by the fact that when Paul does introduce a new topic, viz., fraternal charity in vv. 9–12, he makes use of the *parakalō* formula a second time.

Syriac parallels support the interpretation that Paul has written about the violation of a person's marital rights in v. 6a<sup>116</sup>. Accordingly *en tō pragmati* should be translated "in this matter", the matter at hand, being chastity. In which case the definite article has a demonstrative sense. Nonetheless Paul's thought in v. 6a is not merely repetetive of the thought which he had expressed in v. 4. Rather he has moved on to another aspect of the virtue of chastity. Previously he had instructed the Christian not only to live with his own wife in a holy and honorable fashion; now he instructs the Christian to respect the marriage of his neighbor<sup>117</sup>. He is warning against adultery. The reflexive pronoun of v. 4 is not superfluous. It points to Paul's concern for the Christian's own marriage, in contrast to the concern which the Christian should have for the marriage of his fellow Christians<sup>118</sup>.

#### MOTIVATION

In vv. 6b–8, Paul offers the community at Thessalonica a triple motivation for living according to the instructions which he has just imparted: the judgment, the call to holiness, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In v. 6bc, Paul enunciates the judgment theme: "because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we solemnly forwarned you." Immediately one must ask whether

116. Cf. S.M. GRILL, "In das Gewerbe seines Nächsten eingreifen 1 Tess 4, 6," *Biblische Zeitschrift*. 11 (1967) 118.

117. Rigaux and Rossano have indicated that *adelphos* ("brother") refers to one's neighbor in general, rather than specifically to one's Christian brother. Such a use of *adelphos* would be contrary to Paul's use of the term in the epistle. There should be no difficulty in taking *adelphos* of v. 6a in the sense of one's Christian brother when one realizes that Paul is addressing himself to the Christian community at Thessalonica. His words hardly suggest that he would condone adultery between a Christian and the wife of a non-Christian. Cf. B. RIGAUX, *op. cit.*, pp. 510-511; P. ROSSANO, *op. cit.*, p. 97; E. BEST, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

118. Rickards has written quite enthusiastically about the clarity of the translation found in the *Living Bible* (in contrast to the ambiguity found in RSV, NEB, Jerusalem Bible, Good News Bible, and Phillips). He concludes his summary survey of these six attempts to deal with the *crucis* of vv. 4, 6a in this fashion: "The phrase 'in this matter', however, now tells him that it is still about the same general subject of sexual immorality both within and outside of marriage. The addition in verse 6 is specified as that of not committing adultery with another man's wife. To go against God's will at this point is to 'cheat'." Cf. R.R. RICKARDS, *art. cit.*, p. 247.

Paul is speaking of Christ or God when he speaks of the "Lord" (*kurios*). Typically Paul uses *kurios* as the Christological title par excellence. However v. 6b seems to be an allusion to Ps 94,1<sup>119</sup>, where *kurios* (LXX) certainly designates Yahweh. Indeed it can be said the language of v. 6 evokes the traditional Jewish description of God in the septuagint<sup>120</sup>. On the other hand, Jesus is presented as the one who delivers us from the wrath to come in 1: 10. Jesus is Savior; while God remains the judge of Jewish tradition. Thus it is preferable to understand the *kurios* of v. 6 in reference to God, rather than to Christ<sup>121</sup>. This is consistent with Paul's usage in 5: 2 where, in another eschatological context, *kurios* likewise designates God rather than Christ<sup>122</sup>. Moreover, the subject in all three clauses (vv. 6b-8) is ultimately one and the same, namely, God, as one who judges, one who calls, and one who gives the gift of His Spirit.

As Paul enunciates the theme of judgment, he does not appear to be an orator of the "hellfire and brimstone" tradition. Rather he quietly appeals, once again, to his previous proclamation among the Thessalonians. In 1 Thess 4: 6, he speaks to the Thessalonians of the divine judgment "as we solemnly forewarned you" (*kathōs kai proeipamen humin kai diemarturametha*). The redundancy of Paul's language leads us to conclude that Paul is again using hendiadys, and that the RSV translators were essentially correcting in rendering the two verbs as a single expression. The recall of Paul's earlier proclamation reaffirms the vision that the theme of judgment was indeed an essential part of the early Christian kerygma.

Does this mean that Christians stand under the threat of judgment? Hardly, for Paul quickly moves to the affirmation that "God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness." The point of the affirmation is that the work of salvation has already begun<sup>123</sup>. Paul announces that God calls us in holiness; he does not proclaim that God is calling us unto holiness. The process of sanctification is one which God has already begun.

The call of God constitutes Christians in a state of existence unlike that of the pagans. Pagan existence is here characterized as "uncleanness" — a vocable whose connotation should not be restricted to the sexual sphere<sup>124</sup>. Those who do not know God may be destined for wrath, but those who do know God are called by him to obtain salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ<sup>125</sup>. In short, for Paul the call of God

119. Cf. F. LAUB, *op. cit.*, p. 56, n. 34; H.H. SCHADE, *op. cit.*, p. 270, n. 194.

120. Cf. Jerome H. NEYREY, "Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians: The Theological Factor in 1: 9-10; 2: 4-5; 3: 11-13; 4: 6 and 4: 13-18," in *Society of Biblical Literature. 1980 Seminar Papers*. Ed. by Paul J. Achtemeier. Chicago: Scholars Press, 1980. 219-231, p. 224.

121. Cf. R.F. COLLINS, "The Theology of Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians," *Louvain Studies* 6 (1977) 315-337, pp. 333-334.

122. On this point I find myself in agreement with scholars such as Laub, Schade, Neyrey, while disagreeing with Rigaux, Ellingworth-Nida, and Adinolfi.

123. Cf. H.-H. Schade who draws attention to the fact that Paul has used the preposition *en*, rather than *epi* or *eis*.

124. Cf. F. LAUB, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

125. 1 Thess 1: 10; 5: 8. Cf. R.F. COLLINS. "The Theology of Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians," p. 335.

puts Christians in a privileged position. They have already experienced God's call in salvation and so have no need to fear the wrath to come, from which they are being delivered.

V. 8, which offers the third element of motivation for the correct sexual behaviour of the Thessalonians is linked to the preceding verse by an unusual composite particle<sup>126</sup>. According to Paul, not to live according to the instructions which Paul has imparted is to disregard, not man, but God. The opposition between man and God, reinforced by the lack of an article before "man" indicates that Paul is not thinking about the average human being, rather he is thinking of those who are bearers of the apostolic message<sup>127</sup>. Their word is not the word of men, but the word of God (1 Thes 2: 13). The authority with which they proclaim the traditional norms of moral conduct is an alien authority (vv. 1-2). Accordingly, a rejection<sup>128</sup> of the message of those who have offered a moral paranesis along with the kerygma, and who recall both kerygma and paranesis in this letter, is a rejection of God Himself. Underlying Paul's thought is a notion of the apostolate, to which all four Gospels bear witness<sup>129</sup>. To accept the apostle is to accept the one who sent him; conversely, to reject the apostle is to reject the one who sent him.

The use of the composite particle indicates that, in fact, Paul is continuing his digression on the notion of holiness in v. 8. The theme had already been introduced in v. 7. Now, in v. 8, Paul teaches that the call to holiness is manifest in the present gift of the Spirit<sup>130</sup>. The Spirit is the agent of the process of sanctification. In I: 4-5, Paul had indicated that the sign of election was to be found in the activity of the Spirit; now in 4: 8, he notes that the reality of the call to holiness is likewise to be found in the active Spirit. The Spirit is the power of God, given as gift, and active in the lives of believers.

Essentially Paul's words in v. 8c, "God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you" are a citation of Ez 37: 14. Thus Paul continues to make use of the Scriptures as he offers motivation for the Christian way of life. For Him, the Spirit which is given is the power of sanctification. As gift-presence among the Thessalonian Christians, the Holy Spirit provides personal motivation for and the possibility of that behaviour appropriate to Christians, which is such as to command the respect of outsiders.

Paul's theological reflections are evidently not without their ethical implications. The call to God is such as to lay claim to the service of those who have been called<sup>131</sup>. Yet it is not the ethical which predominates in Paul's reflection. Rather he has brought

126. *Toigaroun*, found elsewhere in the NT, only in Heb 12: 1.

127. Cf. B. RIGAUD, *op. cit.*, p. 514; W. SCHMITHALS, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115. Econtra, E. BEST, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

128. Although the RSV translates *atheton* by "disregards", the Greek verb, with privative *alpha*, would seem to require a stronger translation. Ellingworth and Nida have opted for "rejects", a rather felicitous choice.

129. Cf. Mk 9: 37; Mt 10: 40; Lk 10: 16; Jn 12: 44, 48; 13: 20. It is however only Jn which develops the implications of the rejection of one who has been sent. Cf. Jn 12: 48.

130. Cf. R.F. COLLINS, "The Theology...", p. 325.

131. *Idem.*, p. 323.



the first part of his paranesis to its conclusion by reflecting on the gift of God which constitutes the new mode of being of Christians, a mode of being from and according to which a distinctive life style flows. This life style is the indication that the Christian belongs to God. It is the sign that the believer is holy, i.e., consecrated by the Lord. It is this entire process which can be called sanctification<sup>132</sup>. It is this process which is the object of God's salvific will.

#### CONCLUSION

It would indeed be useful to continue the examination of Paul's paranetic material in 1 Thes to include the second *parakalō* formulation, i.e., that on brotherly love (vv. 9–12). However, the exegesis which has been made apropos vv. 1–8 offers sufficient material for reflection on Paul's ethical style. And so we shall immediately proceed to a few summary remarks on the nature of Pauline ethics, as this is indicated by a study on 1 Thess 4: 1–8.

First of all, one can consider the manner in which Paul has proposed his ethical instruction. On three different occasions in vv. 1–8, Paul appealed to his authority — explicitly to Christ in vv. 1, 2 and implicitly to God in v. 8. Paul has addressed his appeal to the Thessalonian Christians, not because he had great moral insights, but because he was an apostle of Jesus Christ (2: 7) and a spokesman for God (2: 13). He made his demands not on his own authority, but on the authority of the one who sent him. That Paul's demands were directed to the Thessalonian community in this subordinated fashion is apparent in Paul's use of the *parakalō* formula<sup>133</sup>.

As an ambassador, who speaks not in his own name, but in the name of someone else, Paul did not act in an authoritarian manner in the exposition of his moral instruction. Indeed Paul's fashion of imparting ethical instruction in vv. 1–8 is consistent with what he had said of himself and his companions in an earlier section of the letter, namely, "how holy and righteous and blameless was our behavior to you believers; for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory." (2: 10–12).

In short, the authority with which Paul has made his request and offered his instructions is not separable from his person and his mission. On three different occasions (vv. 1, 2, 6), within the space of but eight verses, Paul appealed to the vigorous memory of the Thessalonian Christians. They were to recall what Paul had already told them. Earlier in the letter (1: 5), Paul had cited the kind of men that he and his companions were as a sign of the credibility of his message. It now appears that the life style of Paul, Timothy and Silvanus equally served as a sign of the integrity of his moral exhortation.

132. Cf. F. LAUB, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

133. Terrence Y. MULLINS has cited Paul's use of the *parakalō* formula in 4: 1 as a "divine authority petition". Cf. T.Y. MULLINS, "Petition as a Literary Form", *Novum Testamentum* 5 (1962) 46–54, p. 54; cf. p. 52.

Secondly we should reflect on the distinction, made frequently and correctly by moralists<sup>134</sup>, between formal norms of morality and concrete material norms. In I Thess 4: 1-8, Paul employed two categories that are frequently invoked as formal norms of morality, namely, holiness and the will of God.

Upon examination, however, it appears that each of these categories represents a theological notion rather than an ethical norm<sup>135</sup>. Indeed our analysis has shown that it is impossible to derive concrete material norms directly from the "formal norms" cited by the apostle. The literary forms chosen by the apostle suggest the absence of a strict logical connection between the proclamation of God's will, the announcement of his salvific activity, and Paul's concrete moral instructions. A connection does exist but it is of an order different from that of logical moral deduction.

In terms of the concrete moral norms proposed by Paul, it is clear that Paul proposed traditional ethical material to the Christians of Thessalonica when he preached the Gospel to them. His kerygma was accompanied by paranesis, and the content of the paranesis was traditional ethical material. Then in 1 Thess 4: 1-8, Paul reiterates some small portion of his ethical instruction. What he teaches belongs to the order of concrete material norms, but his language is so ambiguous as to make the interpretation of his thought a difficult task indeed. On examination, the passage at hand, i.e., vv. 3-8, would seem to deal with but a single topic, chastity. Paul digresses on the topic with specific reference to marriage, urging both that the Christian live with his own wife in a chaste manner and that he respect the marriage of others. Such an interpretation of Paul's thought is not the only possible exegesis of vv. 3-8, but that which seems most plausible in view of the language of Paul's text.

To propose the interpretation which we have, and to suggest that Paul has taught what ethicists would call a concreté material norm in vv. 3-8 does not necessarily imply that Paul has a specific situation in mind as he begins his moral instruction. Certainly the language which he has used does not demand that the text be understood as Paul's response to a specific problem existing within the community at Thessalonica. Rather it would seem that Paul is offering general rather than specific ethical instruction. One might conjecture that Paul has offered a reflection on chastity either 1) because the community at Thessalonica was largely comprised of Gentile converts and that Paul, who shared the general Jewish estimation of the sexual mores of the pagans, wanted to guard against back-sliding on the part of his beloved community or 2) because there was some incipient Gnosticism within the community of Thessalonica and that Paul wished to warn the community against deviant sexual behavior, such as which would appear in the community of Corinth, some of whose members were led astray by a form of gnostic enthusiasm. While either interpretation is plausible, an option for one or the other demands an awareness of the situation at Thessalonica and/or an insight into the psyche of Paul, neither of which the study of our extant documentation has yet provided.

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134. Cf., for example, Louis JANSSENS, "Norms and Priorities in a Love Ethics", *Louvain Studies* 6 (1977) 207-238, pp. 207-216.

135. Cf. K. ROMANIUK, "Les motifs parénétiques dans les écrits pauliniens", *Novum Testamentum* 10 (1968) 190-207, p. 202.

Finally, we should say something about the approach to ethics, which was Paul's as he wrote 1 Thess 4: 1-8. Undoubtedly, the most striking feature of Paul's ethical understanding is the close connection between the proclamation of the Gospel and moral paranesis. In this Paul was heir to a Jewish tradition which proclaimed faith in Yahweh, the God of the covenant, but realized that the covenantal relationship between God and the Israelite nation was the ground of moral responsibilities to be exercised by members of the nation. In both his direct address to the Thessalonians and his literary correspondence with them, Paul associated kerygma and paranesis.

For Paul the behavior of the Thessalonian Christians set them apart from those who "do not know God." Yet Paul does not look upon ethics in a moralistic fashion, nor does he look upon the conduct appropriate to the Christian from a merely ethical point of view. Rather he speaks of God's salvific will. The salvation which God wills is manifest in appropriate conduct, namely that conduct which shows that the Christian belongs to the Father, a sign that the Christian is holy. Unto this end the Father gives an enabling gift to believers, that is, the Spirit of holiness. Thus the ethical life style appropriate to the Christian is a sign of the activity of the Spirit within him.

In effect, the God who calls is the God who enables believers to respond to his call. Nonetheless this call involves moral responsibility. While Paul writes of the Lord who avenges, his preferred emphasis is on the call rather than the judgment (which falls on those who do not know God). From the fact that it is the gracious call which motivates Christian conduct, one can deduce two qualities of the Pauline ethic. On the one hand, Paul's ethic is a responsive ethic. He sees moral behavior as the Christian response to God's call and gift. Thus one can appropriately describe Paul's ethic as an ethic of thanksgiving or an ethic of gratitude. For Paul, the Christian does not act morally in order to achieve holiness, rather he should act morally because he is already called in holiness. For this he should give thanks. On the other hand, Paul's ethic is a growth ethic. Paul has encouraged the Christians of Thessalonica to continue in the moral life which they are already leading. His is a dynamic view of ethics, which views the moral life of the Christian as one characterized by consistency, perseverance, and growth.

A third general feature of Paul's ethics is its traditional character. One should then inquire as to the ethical tradition to which Paul is heir, that which he recalls in the brief exhortation which we have analyzed. From the analysis, it would appear that it is the Jewish moral tradition which has largely shaped Paul's ethical outlook and the content of his moral instruction, both oral and written. Paul's allusion to the Bible, his reflection of the technical language of the halakhic tradition, and the Semitic quality of his expression suggest that Paul's exhortation had a distinctively Jewish flavor. Indeed, in vv. 1-8, it is only the expression "the passion of lust" (v. 5) which clearly reflects the language of Hellenistic ethics. When 1 Thessalonians is compared with Paul's later writings, one is struck by the extensive use of Hellenistic ethical materials in the later writings — catalogues of virtues and vices, household codes, etc. — and the absence of this type of material from his earliest letter. Perhaps, then, one should draw the conclusion that just as Paul's preaching of the Gospel at Thessalonica appropriated

the language of the Jewish Hellenistic missionary sermon<sup>136</sup>, the Sitz-im-Leben of his ethical discourse was the Jewish halakhic tradition<sup>137</sup>.

It was from his Jewish background, but in the light of his Christian faith that Paul proclaimed to the Thessalonians: "This is the will of God: your sanctification." He presented traditional ethical material, with a new understanding of God's salvific will. In sum, Paul, too, is the "scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven, like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." (Mt 13: 51).

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136. Cf. Gunther BORNKAMM, *Early Christian Experience. New Testament Library*. London: SCM, 1969, p. 32; Johannes MUNCK, "1 Thess. i. 9-10 and the Missionary Preaching of Paul. Textual Exegesis and Hermeneutic Reflections", *New Testament Studies* 9 (1963) 95-110, pp. 101-102.

137. I would not, however, chose to be as specific as G.F. SNYDER who wrote that "These ethical precepts — turning from idols, sexual fidelity, and love of brother (do not murder) — approximate the so-called Noachic code. "G.F. SNYDER, "Apocalyptic and Didactic Elements", p. 238; cf. "A Summary of Faith", p. 351.